Many into One: Gurbānī kīrtan between pluriversality, nationalism, and homologation, or why the study of Gurbānī kīrtan is relevant to the ethnomusicology of South Asia

Dr. Francesca Cassio (Hofstra University)

Stemmed from *anek deśī* and *mārga* traditions, *Gurbānī kīrtan* repertoire took a distinct shape during the Sikh Gurūs' era (late 15th - early 18th century) with a rich gamut of song-forms, *rāga*s, and rhythmic cycles that have yet to be acknowledged by South Asian music scholars for their historical and musicological importance. In this comparative panel discussing *dhrupad*-based *kīrtan* forms, the presenter argues how the study of heritage *Gurbānī dhrupad* and *partāl* compositions not only contributes to reconstruct the cross-pollination among local cultures in the early-modern era, but also exposes the colonially-derived epistemic ground that had an impact on Post-Partition scholarship and, ultimately, on the preservation of "little" indigenous knowledges (Redfield and Singer 1954, Powers 1980). Over the last seventy years, the assimilating forces of nationalism and globalization affected the heterogeneity of South Asian music cultures endorsing, through the Media and institutionalized education, the use of stereotyped sonic models and monolithic categories (i.e. classical and folk, sacred and secular) to frame local traditions. While Gurū Nānak's *kīrtan* celebrated *pluriversality* (Mignolo and Walsh 2018) as a value using *anek* literatures and musical languages resonating within his inclusive one, the twenty-first century renditions of Sikh *kīrtan* have become the epitome of homologation to sonic paradigms of a very different (neocolonial, nationalist and exclusive) "one". At the verge of disappearing, the Gur-Sikh heritage repertoire, still carries the distinct *Gurbānī* signature which speaks of *pluriversality*, and as such urges scholars to recall and include a pre-colonial history that survives orally and empowers multiple memories (Rothberg 2009) of indigenous knowledges. Encompassing the notion of 'theorizing the local' (Wolf 2009), the approach taken here orientates towards a decolonization and de-nationalization of Guru Nanak's *ek-anek* musical vision, that in turn reveals the necessity to radically rethink the ethnomusicological reading of underrepresented cultures of South Asia.

Synchronies of Musical Sound: Studying Connections between Duration and Visualization in Bengali Devotional Song

Dr. Eben Graves (Yale University)

Research on devotional musics in South Asia has focused on the religious, social and political meanings expressed in song texts. However, what has often escaped attention is how aspects of musical form and style create and transform features of devotional thought and practice. Using the analytic lens of synchronies of musical sound, this paper considers relationships between temporal aspects of musical form and time-related dimensions of devotional practice in Bengal with a focus on temporal duration. Through the case of the devotional song genre of Bengali *padabali kirtan*, and its suggested historical links with Dhrupad, I specifically consider how musicians act on time (Born 2015) through the connections made between musical time and features of devotional practice. The synchrony of musical sound I study in this paper makes connections between temporal duration in the linked spheres of musical style and processes of meditation. I focus on the long-duration musical style used in *padabali kirtan* that features slow tempos and large meters (*tals*) in performance. Referred to colloquially as large-meter *kirtan* (*boro-tal kirtan*) this style provides a time frame that privileges temporal duration, thus exhibiting a link with the durational parameters used in processes of meditation and visualization. A final discussion in this paper considers the relative lack of attention paid towards *ragas* (melody types) amongst performers of *padabali kirtan* in performance. In the context of this

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panel and conference, this paper seeks to compare and contrast the purported connections between Dhrupad and devotional song in Bengal, a relationship that is clearly articulated by musicians, yet has received little critical reflection in academic discourse.

Guru Nanak: Allegories of Oneness

Dr. Harjeet Singh Grewal (University of Calgary)

This paper explores the relationship between allegorical thinking and Guru Nanak's idea of Oneness. All ten of the Sikh Gurus were involved in privileging a singular cosmic and ontic vision to which all humans have access. The ability or inability to retain this ontic focus is what was problematized by the Sikh Gurus beginning with Nanak. In order to maintain an openness to all for truthful action, the Gurus critiqued totalizing forms of ratiocinated, or calculated syllogistic thinking. Oneness had important implication in maintaining an ethic and politics that was beholden to all people without consideration of religion, caste, class, race, and other forms of differentiation. It is often forgotten today that this places Nanak amongst earlier carriers of true knowledge, or Arifeen -individuals whose impact is often rendered inert in universal colonizer thought using the term (Sufi) mystics. The significance of Guru Nanak, both today and during his lifetime, is his ability to enable everyday language (*bhakha*) to convey the knowledge of Oneness effectively. Thus, the question of Oneness is connected to how language is and the relationship between language use and existentiality. I argue that Guru Nanak vivified *bhakha* with the light of Oneness through use of allegory to make visible the invisible, or the intangible appears tangible. This is how *eka-anek* (One-unOne) enters everyday language and is depersonalized to positions itself outside the relationship ambit of dual-nondual logos. Eka-anek moves knowledge to a plane that open expansive without being concerned about difference. This implies that pluralism can be considered without ratiocination and avoid relativistic ambiguous assertions. Eka-anek is an allegorical poiesis which bring that which is not-formed but is all-forming (*nirankār*) into formation (*ākār*).

Shah Jo Rāg within circulations of devotional poetry and musical labor

Pei-ling Huang (Harvard University)

In this paper I focus on Shah Jo Rāg to consider the circulations of poetic texts and traveling musicians who contributed their musical labor and knowledge in organizing and performing the poetry of religious renunciants. This repertoire, consisting mainly of poetry by eighteenth-century Sindhi saint Shah Abdul Latif Bhitai, is orally transmitted by *rāgī faqīr*s at his shrine. It offers insights into the eclectic and interconnected practices that consolidated a wide range of poetry and melodic idioms into this devotional tradition. In Shāh Jo Rāg, *faqīr*s perform chapters of verses organized according to Surs, which adhere to a topical theme and set of melodic rules. I present preliminary thoughts on two avenues for exploring the circulations that shaped this repertoire: in the non-Sindhi Surs that *faqīr*s transmit, and in Surs that share names with *rāga*s in other courtly and regional traditions. First, *rāgī faqīr*s today perform Surs Hindī Burvo, Hīr, and Ḍhol Māru'ī, which are excluded from published versions of Shah Latif"s Risalo (poetry collection). These Surs, while not by Shah Latif, contain *dohā*s by Kabir, Guru Nanak, Dadu, and verses composed in Dhatki and the Sialkoti dialect by unknown poets, hinting at extensive cross-regional travels. Second, Kalyāṇ and Soraṭh are Surs sung by *faqīr*s as well as *rāga*s used for compiling the Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Pañc-vāṇi. I will analyze the melodic rules for performing these Surs to offer points of comparison for scholars working on the musical traditions of Guru Nanak and other devotional poets.

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Burnishing devotion in song: the conversation between Baba Nanak and Sheikh Farid

Manpreet Kaur (Columbia University)

The paper is invested in understanding how we might use the modern material archive to study the performance pasts of devotional song texts. Scriptural and devotional texts in early modern vernacular north India are widely believed, by scholars, practitioners, and believers alike, to have been composed and transmitted in 'oral' performance environments. The Sikh scriptural and literary corpus is exemplary in this regard— not only does it center the oral/ aural experience in devotional practice, it also makes up one of the richest material repositories in this period through which this question can be adequately studied. Thus, through the Sikh example, we can understand how the authority of textual material and the history of their transmission interfaced with the sonic lives of those texts. In this paper,

I take the example of the *janamsākhi* literature, and suggest that its composers and compilers were, in recording the life of the Guru, also committing to writing the earliest moments of composing, collecting, and anthologising what came to be the sacred corpus of the Sikhs. The paper will focus on the exchanges between Baba Nanak and Sheikh Farid from various extant *janamsakhi* recensions. I will stress two aspects of this narrative genre in my presentation—dialogue and music—and discuss how these two are instrumental to how Guru's *bani* was imagined as having been uttered for the first time, as well as how it travelled far and wide in the Guru's own life-time. I will also share examples from visual art that complement this picture of a dialogic music-filled devotional environment. In my approach, I suggest that the study of *janamsakhi* literature as vernacular histories also requires paying attention to the specific generic conventions of this form and its place within the Sikh tradition.

The Epistemic Ecology of the Guru's Vidya and the Resilience of the Gurbani Kirtan Parampara

Dr. Nirinjan Khalsa-Baker (Loyola Marymount University)

In line with this conference's theme to honor the Ek-Anek message of Guru Nanak, this paper will explore the ways in which the sonic path of Guru Nanak offers an embodied experience of the Guru's vidya that transforms subjectivity toward a state of being both sovereign and deeply interconnected with all others. The enlightening knowledge of the Guru's vidya, rooted in Gurbani, is expressed and experienced through various linguistic, philosophical, pedagogic, performative, ritual and musical modes, comprising an "ecology of knowledges" (Boventura de Sausa Santos) that are at the same time uniquely sovereign and interconnected. A lifeline at the heart of this epistemological ecology (Code 2006) is the Gurbani Kirtan parampara, which has transmitted the Guru's vidya over generations since the Sikh Guru Era (1469-1708). However, over the last century, this knowledge stream reached near-extinction due to British colonization and a focus on nationalist identity politics. The loss of performative and musical memory spurred a critical renaissance in the late 1980s to recover the remnants of Sikh's intangible knowledge contained in the musical heritage. This paper will utilize my ethnographic research on the contemporary revival of pre-colonial Gurbani Kirtan to demonstrate how divergent pedagogic approaches are affecting how Sikh thought and identity are being transmitted today. This research reveals: 1) reformist attempts to institutionalize and homogenize "classical" Gurmat Sangeet into a normative standard through the erasure of diverse practices, much like colonial-era religious reform; 2) nostalgic attempts to revive an ancient musico-aesthetic purity through the appropriation of "tradition" and creation of new histories; and 3) the resilience the Gurbani Kirtan paramapara to sustain pre-colonial knowledge, memory, pedagogy and practice that resists colonial and national attempts to homogenize, fossilize and appropriate Sikh (musical) identity. This paper will argue that the orally-transmitted knowledge of the Gurbani Kirtan parampara can thus be understood as an "uncolonized" sovereign (Ek) living system of knowledge that at the same time is interconnected with other epistemic ecologies (Anek).

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Ik Bābā Akāl Rūpa Dūjā Rabābī Mardānā

Saleema J. Khawaja (University of Lahore)

The presenter will share select Gurbāṇī Saṅgīta śabadrītas (compositions) that she studied from Bhāī Ghulām Muhammad 'Chāṅd', son of Rabābī Bhāī Suṅdar of Darbār Sāhib, Amritsar, and nephew of Bhāī Chāṅd, and who was among Pakistan's last exponents of the Rabābī tradition. Though she is not trained in the specifics of the GurSikh traditions, she will look closely at the pedagogy she underwent as she learnt śabadrītas of the Gurbāṇī Saṅgīta tradition. Most Rabābī exponents from Darbār Sahib, Khadoor Sahib and Tarn Taran had migrated to Lahore when India was partitioned in 1947 and only occasionally performed when the Gurudwaras in Pakistan were opened to the public when they converged to celebrate anniversaries of the Gurus. The presentation, based on the limited repertoire she was able to harness, will attempt to discover the kīrtan paramparā as it existed before 1947 and as remembered by the last Rabābī exponents in spite of being separated from Gurudwaras where they traditionally performed for centuries.

Gurbani Sangit and the Intermediate Sphere in North Indian Music

Dr. Peter Manuel (John Jay College & Graduate Center of the CUNY)

Gurbani sangit can be seen as a constituent of what I, in an earlier publication, called the "intermediate sphere," comprising a set of regional music genres which exhibit features of both of classical music and folk music, or which comprise regional variants of Hindustani music. Francesca Cassio, in a contemporary article, explored the historical relationships between gurbani sangit, haveli sangit, and concert dhrupad. In this presentation I seek to further contextualize gurbani sangit by discussing how its repertoire of ragas contains archaisms, and also affinities with the raga repertoire of other genres, including dhrupad family variants (including haveli sangit, and Assamese bor git), and specifically western Indian modal repertoires found in regional Hindustani music, , and Rajasthani Langa and Manganhar music, and Sindhi Shah Jo Rag (to be elucidated further by Pei-Ling Huang).

Guru Nanak Dev's Ek-Anek Vision

Dr. Muthu Mohan (Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai)

The theme of One and many is very old to India and we find its earliest discussion in Jaina's Anekantavada and Vedanta;s Ekantavada. The latter contributes to the making of a metaphysical oneness which evidences the impossibility of Oneness at the social empirical realm. Consequently, the varna or caste system was proposed for the temporal life. Jaina's Anekantavada along with its Syadvada and Nayavada established the conception of multiplicity adequately and lucidly, extending the theme to concepts such as ahimsa, tolerance etc. The second part of the story starts from the mid-medieval period, along with the new mystic poets Ravidas, Kabir and Guru Nanak. Now the ideas of Ek and Anek reoccur with the comprehensive meaning of oneness and equality. The realms perceived are both temporal and metaphysical without any division, in their unity. It was a post-medieval thought choosing music as its aesthetic mode of communication. It organically and passionately celebrates the endless variety of differences. While the uncompromising straight line represents the human ego (haumein), the curved lines mean the dialectical and the musical. It is the community, the Guru visualized to construct. It was a new beginning.

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Sikh Performance of Memory: Chauṇkī Charhnī at Dārbār Sāhib

Dr. Janice Protopapas (Independent Researcher)

Congregational hymn singing has played a vital role in the formation, cultivation and persistence of the Sikh identity amidst a 400-year-old history of persecution, formation and migration. Throughout Sikh history, walking processionals of hymn singing have served as popular and pervasive ways through which the congregation could celebrate, protest, and remember. One of the oldest and most enduring processionals is the Chalna Chauṇkī conducted at the Dārbār Sāhib, Amritsar. This hour- long hymn singing service commemorates the seven-year incarceration of sixth Sikh Gurū, Hargobind at Gwalior Fort (1612- 1619). Performed daily, an ensemble of Sikh devotees chant a repertoire of hymns as they circumambulate the temple and sacred tank invoking the memory of this historical moment, demonstrating the powerful role of communal song not only a medium of protest but as a method of inculcating historical consciousness. This paper explores the musical, textual, and performance features of the lay-led processional hymn singing services at Dārbār Sāhib as performances of memory, examining how memory is musically and textually encoded in this service and the methods used for retrieval. Embodied through the ritual of lay-led hymn singing, this ceremony acts as a daily "re-membering" of an inherited memory through a complex musical and rhythmical performance of *jyotian di kirtan* style hymn singing. Based on current ethnographic research, including interviews and audio-video recordings, the author explores how the walking processional acts as a mode of transmitting a historical consciousness, arousing emotions that re-enact the past events, bringing them into the present moment. Like the minute hand on a clock, the ensembles rhythmical steps demonstrate the persistence of memory over time.

Oneness within variety: the confluence of poetry, music, devotional theatre and fine art in the sāñjhī festival of Vraja

Dr. Selina Sharma (Vraja Kala Sanskriti Sansthana)

Art forms in India trace their common origin to the liturgical tradition of the ancient Hindu temples. Be it music, dance, theatre, or the various manifestations of visual art, they all emerged from the ritual practice, and even today the forms of devotional art exist in convergence rather than as separate entities, tied together by the bond of their functionality within the larger liturgical frame.

In the devotional tradition of Vraja, one of India's foremost pilgrimage centers and birthplace of Lord Krishna, the confluence of literature, visual and performing arts is best observed in the festival of *sāñjhī*. A tradition rooted in folk mythology, *sāñjhī* was introduced into the Vaiṣṇava temples during the 15th/16th centuries where it developed into a highly sophisticated classical art. The festival of *sāñjhy* is centered around a visual design similar to the *maṇḍala* or mystic diagram of ancient Hindu and Buddhist ritual practice. In the Vraja tradition, the *sāñjhī* theme is interwoven with Krishnaite mythology, and the episodes relating to Lord Krishna, Rādhā and their friends celebrating the rural *sāñjhī* rites is eloquently narrated in mediaeval Vrajabhāṣā poetry which is sung in the styles of *samājagāyana* and *havelī kīrtana* at the time when the *sāñjhī* design is displayed and ritually worshiped in the temples. What is more, the entire narrative is enacted in the *sāñjhī līlā* plays of the *rāsalīlā*, the characteristic devotional theatre from Vraja which combines poetry, song, dance, narrative and drama along with – in the *sāñjhī līlā* – the display of a *sāñjhī* design on stage.

The present paper examines the aspects of music, poetry, dance and devotional theatre as part of a tradition of visual art, focusing thereby on the aspect of oneness within the variety of arts, which is defined by their ritual functionality. A brief mention will moreover be made of recent efforts to revive the unique tradition of *sāñjhī*, which is currently on the verge of extinction.

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Anēka gavaiyyē ēka gurbāṇī

Bhai Baldeep Singh
(Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Religious Studies, GNDU, and The Anād Foundation)

Gurū Nānak's voice would have been enough, yet in his *pōtthī* he reserved pages for his past, present, and future to calligraph themselves. Just *ēka* (one) language, Pañjābī—Gurū Nānak's mother tongue—would have been enough, yet his *pōtthī* contains *anēka* (over two dozen) languages and nearly 120 dialects, proving revelation and wisdom are not synonymous with one language or one ethnicity. *Ēka* poetic form would have been enough to say the ineffable for Guru Nānak, yet his *pōtthī* contains *anēka* poetic forms and *rāga*s. Gurū Bābā Nānak sang in *ēka* and *anēka swarā*s. I understand the vision of the Gurū Bābā to also include the Sufī and Bhagatī Mārga voices, the genuine seekers from all faiths, denying exclusivism in and beyond GurSikhi.

Gurbani and the Aural Kinesthetics of Place in Sikh Fiji

Davindar Singh (Harvard University)

Following religious and ethnic persecution, including genocidal riots over land and capital, much of Fijian Sikh life is intentionally isolated. This self-containment is not a fixed condition, but rather is continually produced through signs of recognition that directly mark people and places as Sikh, and signs of avoidance that indirectly mark others as non-Sikh. Yet as Sikh and non-Sikh environments can intrude upon one another, thus too can signs of Sikhism or signs of alterity become intertwined. This paper outlines the role of Gurbani in making Fijian places *feel* Sikh — homes, Gurdwaras, farms — and of challenges to the production of this *feeling*. These challenges include historical anti-Sikh violence and the material cost of Gurbani recitation — Granthis have to be imported, even as the Sikh population dwindles in numbers and resources. To trace the extent of these challenges, I examine the relative portability of signs of Fijian Sikhism: how Sikhs move their bodies, how far Gurbani can spread in its surrounding environment, and how Sikhs relate to this environment through Gurbani. Building on recent sociology of interpretive meaning (Glaeser 2011), I trace the physical mobilities and constraints of Sikhs and Sikh practices in a seemingly hostile environment, and show that these mobilities and constraints cohere in the discourse and emotions of Sikh practices. I show that Sikh negotiation of adversity in sound and motion indicates a broader fact of sociality: it is by their mutually co-constitutive signs that we see how discourse, emotion, and kinesthetics are interwoven.

Gurmat Saṅgīt Rāga Tradition and it's Concurrent Challenges

Dr. Gurnam Singh (Panjabi University, Patiala)

In Sikhism, the Sikh *Gurūs* developed *shabad kīrtan* tradition for the communication of their spiritual message, which is a unique musical way of devotion. In context to the compatibility between the eternity of divine *bāṇī* and *rāga*, the founder of Sikhism *Gurū Nānak* composed his divine verse in various *rāgas* of classical, folk, regional and ethnic origin. The successor Sikh *Gurūs* followed this tradition. The hymns of other Saints and devotees composed in various *rāgas* also has been compiled in *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*.

A specific rāga based music arrangement has been inscribed in *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* for the musical presentation of *Gurbāṇī*. Some special characteristics also have been described for *shabad kīrtan* in the code of Sikh conduct and convention. The tradition set and developed by the Sikh *Gurūs* and this art of *shabad kīrtan* is known as *Gurmat Sangīt*. In the present which has been developed into an independent academic field.

In *Gurmat Sangīt* 31 rāgas and 31 *rāga* forms prescribed in *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib*, 19 *rāgas* in *Dasam Granth* and 212 *rāgas* prescribed in *Sarabloh Granth* are great melodies of this tradition. Right from the *Gurū's* period, a large number of *shabad kīrtan* compositions have been passed over through generations of *Kīrtankārs*,

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which is a valuable treasure of the Sikhs. A series of compiled publications is also available in *Gurmat Sangīt* literature. Proudly we have been able to collect from the last almost 100 years treasure of about 7700 *rāga* based *shabad kīrtan* composiotns of *Rāgīs*, *Rabābī* and *Taksālī Kīrtankārs* published in 59 various prominent compilations produced by 20 scholars different scholars of this field.

In the present context, this *rāga* based tradition of *Gurbāṇī* is facing serious challenges from the contemporary one *Gurmat rāga* based *shabad kīrtan* of *Gurbāṇī* in a popular style. The ignorance in practicing the prescribed *rāga* tradition of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* is a major reason behind this grave situation. Unfortunately most of the contemporary *shabad kīrtan* compositions are being composed under the influence of popular *Gīt*, *Ġazal*, film or Sufi style of music. Amongst the contemporary *Kīrtankārs* instead of the great legendary Sikh *Kīrtankārs*, role models for them have shifted to some contemporary popular singers of other music traditions.

There is a big erosion of *rāgas* in *shabad kīrtan chaukī* system while performing various *rāga* based segments. The essence and originality of authentic *shabad kīrtan Aṅg* / style is continuously missing. Obviously, it might result into losing the recognition and identification of the rich melodic *rāga* tradition, which would be a great loss to the coming generations. In the times to come, it will be very difficult to fill the conflict between theory and practice of *shabad kīrtan* preached and taught by Sikh *Gurūs*. The theoretical and practical foundation of *Gurmat Sangīt* that has been elaborated through the decades of hard work and toil, demands a serious concern and attention.

In the present context, it is utmost important to implement musicological arrangement of *Srī Gurū Granth Sāhib* and *shabad kīrtan chaukī* tradition according to the code of Sikh conduct and conventions (*Sikh Rahit Maryādā*) in its true and authentic spirit.

Following the originality of the authentic *rāgas*, proper voice culture and correct information of *rāga* system with String instruments during the academic training is essentially indispensable in the syllabi. At this stage for the training of string instruments rather than frequent use of Harmonium will help in this direction.

Regarding this an audio visual and music notation based archives of authentic traditional *rāga* based *shabad kīrtan* compositions is also required. Along with this constant organisations of *Gurmat Sangīt* performances amongst Sikh masses and Sikh youth at every level will create an audience to appreciate the real rāga based tradition. Such conscious efforts only will be helpful for the preservation of rich intangible *rāga* heritage of *Gurmat Sangīt* for our successors.

Srī Akāl Takhat Sāhib and other Sikh organisations like *Shiromaṇī Gurdwārā Prabaṅdhak* Committee *Amritsar* should implement tradition of *rāga* based *shabad kīrtan* in the true spirit .This will definitely manifest the unique identity of *Gurmat Sangīt* and and legacy of Sikh music at global level.

The Early Twentieth Century Origins of Gurmat Sangīt

Kirit James Singh (London University, SOAS)

Gurmat Sangīt, today, is a term which has gained currency in reference to Sikh sacred music, or *Gurbānī Kīrtan*, when performed in accordance with the *rāgs* mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib, using traditional instruments. As the existing scholarship has shown, this is due to the appropriation of the term, in the late twentieth century, by reformists who have attempted to standardise and institutionalise 'Sikh music'. In this paper, however, I trace the origins of this term to the early twentieth century, demonstrating how the idea of a distinct 'Sikh music' initially arose due to its affinity with the causes of the Singh Sabha religious reform movement, i.e., Sikh identity (re)formation and Sikh education. I show how the development of early *Gurmat Sangīt* was fuelled particularly by the patronage of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh of Patiala; an important music patron and a rising Sikh leader of this period. It was his patronage which led to the publishing of one of the seminal works on *Gurmat Sangīt*; the *Gurmat Ratan Sangīt Bhaṇḍār* (1922) by Bhai Prem Singh Ragi. By analysing this work, along with similar works of this period, I explore the extent to which early *Gurmat Sangīt* was also influenced by the reform of Hindustani music and, in particular, the ideology of V. D. Paluskar. Being a product of this transitional period, and combining both reformist and traditional elements, I show

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how this early idea of *Gurmat Sangīt* was far removed from the institutionalised notion of 'Sikh music' associated with the term today.

Three Kirtan experts answer questions on Kirtan

Manjit Singh (Independent Researcher, SikhRI)

For the development of an online Kirtan course *Introduction to Sabad Kirtan,* three distinct experts of Sikh Kirtan were interviewed. Prof. Kartar Singh (Gurmat Sangeet Academy, Anandpur Sahib, India), Principal Sukhwant Singh (Baba Sucha Singh Gurmat Sangeet Academy, Jandiala Guru, Amritsar, India) and Bhai Kultar Singh (Hazuri Ragi Gurduara Bangla Sahib and Sis Ganj Sahib, New Delhi, India) answered a wide range of questions from simple definitions of Kirtan to its relation with Anhad Sangit (unstruck music). The paper will compare and contrast their responses based on their stances and repertoires. The paper will also, highlight similarities in their responses in light of their training and their current practices**.**

Dhadhi Nanak's Pluriversal Sonics

Dr. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh (Colby College, Maine)

Guru Nanak frequently refers to himself as a dhadhi in Var Majh. What was the appeal of this group of wandering singers for the Guru? What is the dynamic process of the dhadhi aesthetic launched by him? My paper analyzes metaphysical instruments, an infinite orchestra, and the universal conductor who leads dhadi Nanak's pluriversal sonics.

Guru Nanak's Vision of Ek-Anek in the Context of Religious Pluralism

Dr. Pashaura Singh (University of California, Riverside)

This presentation will look at Guru Nanak's vision of *Ek-Anek* ("One-Many") with respect to the inclusion of *Bhagat Bani* ("Utterances of the Devotees", works of 15 medieval poet-saints of North India) in the Guru Granth Sahib, the foundational text of the Sikh tradition. In the 'one world' of today the various religious traditions are consciously interacting with each other in mutual observations and dialogue. Religious pluralism reflects the situation of the simultaneous existence in a single social arena of a number of different worldviews that are considered incompatible with one another. It has always been a fact of life but its awareness has become more evident in recent times than before as a result of the process of globalization. In the early decades of sixteenth century Guru Nanak encountered diverse religious traditions of Hindu, Muslim and Nath origins. He was strongly opposed to an exclusive claim that a particular tradition might make to possess the sole religious truth. Indeed, the spirit of accommodation had always been an integral part of his attitude towards other traditions. He acknowledged the usage of different names of God across religious boundaries.

A Dialogue on the Ideal Orientation to Revelation in the banī of Sheikh Farīd and Guru Nanak

Puninder Singh (University of Michigan)

Guru Nanak's encounter with the *banī* of Sheikh Farīd as preserved in *Guru Granth Sahib* exemplifies the *pluriversal* nature of the Sikh tradition. Revelation in the Sikh tradition has not been singular, an event that occurs at only one time and one place, but rather a continual unfolding of *sat*, truth, taking on a variety of

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forms and semiotic resonances; verbal, symbolic, metaphorical, musical. The story of Guru Nanak's interaction with Sheikh Farīd's *banī* is well known in the Sikh tradition; visiting Pakpattan on one of his *udaasi*s, or travels, he became acquainted with the *kalaam* of Sheikh Farīd through his spiritual descendants, and took it upon himself to preserve the body of work that he recognized as a revelation of the spirit of *śabad*, or True Word. He, as well as some of the subsequent Sikh Gurus, interspersed their own *banī* within the collected *śloka*s of Sheikh Farīd, engendering a new, dialogic experience of *śabad*, a single truth that can be expressed in a myriad of forms; *ek-anek*. Guru Nanak's various journeys, physical, metaphorical, ideational, poetic, serve to illustrate that, from the Sikh perspective, truth is not limited by time, language, or tradition, but rather, it is the cultivation of a particular orientation to hearing truth that allow one to experience revelation. The cultivation of this orientation is one of the primary subjects of Farīd's *banī*, and Guru Nanak, in his dialogic response, expands upon this topic in outlining his own concept of the *gurmukh*. Guru Nanak's understanding and engagement with Farīd's *banī* provides us with a model of the *pluriversal* Sikh approach to receiving revelation; recognizing and understanding truth wherever and in whatever form it appears.

"Boundless Waves Arise in My Body": Diverse Spiritual Interpretations through Diverse Musical Experiences

Dr. Vivek Virani (University of Texas)

A central theme in Kabir poetry is the futility of searches for Truth centered on the written word. The *khabar* (message), Kabir says, can only be discovered through one's own inner experience. Yet scholars, even when we encounter Kabir through living musical traditions, often reduce those traditions to texts for analysis. Even though most singer's of Kabir's *vāṇī* (voice, word) emphasize the centrality of the poetic text, my ethnographic research suggests that seekers' musical experiences play a crucial role in their understanding and personal implementation of the poetry. Different musical treatments and environments may reinforce or emphasize different concepts or principles of Kabir's poetry and implicitly suggest different behavioral responses.

This paper, drawing on my ethnography of Kabir poetry sung in diverse musical genres and socioreligious environments as well as my own experience as a participant in spiritual music, analyzes how diverse musical manifestations may facilitate diverse philosophical and practical interpretations. The analysis is not limited to musical sound, but also considers sociality, power hierarchies, emotive frameworks, ritual framing, and other phenomenological aspects of the musical event. I argue that all of these elements contribute to participants' understanding of core concepts of Self, Divinity, interiority, alterity, and purpose. I further suggest that diverse musical approaches may be not only beneficial, but necessary to study and appreciate the breadth of the teachings of the Gurus and Sants.

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